

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **March 23, 2000**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- Congressional Letter;
- EPA Sampling Results;
- CAG Member Questions for EPA; and
- Next steps, including next meeting agenda and date.

#### **Congressional Letter**

Mayor Tony Berget reported that he, Don Wilkins, Commissioner Rita Windom, Cyrus Lee, and Leroy Thom had met to consider drafting a letter to Montana's Congressional delegation concerning screening of former W.R. Grace employees who have left the Libby area. Based on advice from Senator Burns office, the drafting committee decided not to write the letter to the delegation at this time. Jeff Lybarger, Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR) Project Coordinator the Libby medical screening, clarified that the primary purpose of the project is not research to produce generalized knowledge, but rather to test people and refer them for medical treatment. The screening will also meet EPA's needs to understand the pathways of exposure to tremolite asbestos in Libby. Dr. Lybarger also stated that at present, ATSDR does not have the capacity to search out people who have moved away. After discussion, the CAG voted 11-5 to send a letter to ATSDR's Dr. Henry Faulk and EPA's Bill Yellowtail and Tim Fields with copies to the Montana delegation, asking that funding be provided to allow screening of former W.R. Grace employees who have left the Libby area. The addresses for Dr. Faulk, Mr. Yellowtail, and Mr. Fields are attached in Appendix 3. Mayor Berget, with assistance from other CAG members, volunteered to draft a letter to the three federal officials for the CAG's review and approval. The members' draft letter is included here so that all CAG members may consider it prior to the next meeting. During the discussion, a W.R. Grace spokesperson, Alan Stringer, stated that his Company is willing to provide screening of former employees at their present location. W.R. Grace will also on a case by case basis provide funds for former employees to travel from within Montana to Libby for screening if they cannot otherwise afford to do so.

#### **EPA Sampling Results**

Paul Peronard reported on the results EPA sampling of indoor air quality, insulation, dust, and soils at Libby homes and businesses. Mr. Peronard also reported on sampling done at Libby schools.

##### Indoor Air Quality

Indoor air quality was sampled at 32 homes and 3 businesses. Three properties were found with large [i.e. greater than 10 microns ( $\mu$ )] asbestos fibers of high concern, two with actinolite-tremolite and one

with chrysotile fibers. One property had fibers of moderate concern, actinolite-tremolite fibers in the 5-10  $\mu$  range. Eleven properties had actinolite-tremolite fibers of low concern, i.e. smaller than 5  $\mu$ , and seven had chrysotile fibers in this same size range. The highest indoor air concentration was 0.0003 fibers per cubic centimeter which is about 10,000 times less than the concentrations found 25 to 30 years ago in Libby.

### Insulation

Out of 29 samples, actinolite-tremolite fibers were found eleven times and chrysotile fibers were found twice. Only one sample had greater than 2% by weight of actinolite-tremolite fibers. Two samples had 1-2% to 2% by weight actinolite-tremolite fibers range. Eight samples detected actinolite-tremolite fibers at less than 1% by weight, and two samples found chrysotile fibers at less than 1% by weight. No correlation was apparent between the asbestos found in the insulation and asbestos indoor air concentrations. EPA advises that if you have Zonolite insulation in your home, that you treat it as if it has asbestos in it and avoid stirring it up.

### Soils

The yards, gardens and driveways of 35 properties were sampled. One property had 3% actinolite-tremolite by weight in the backyard and one property had 1% by weight of these same fibers in the driveway. Seventeen properties had trace amounts of actinolite-tremolite fibers, i.e. less than 1% by weight. The properties with the 3% and 1% soil values did not have elevated asbestos concentrations in the indoor air. EPA intends to investigate why the two properties had the higher values (i.e. 1% or larger by weight).

### Dust

Dust was sampled in 34 properties in places such as window sills and beneath refrigerators where dust is expected to collect. No large (i.e. 10  $\mu$  and larger) actinolite-tremolite fibers were found. Nine samples had large chrysotile fibers. One sample had actinolite-tremolite fibers in the 5-10  $\mu$  size range which is of moderate concern. Eight samples had chrysotile fibers in this size range. Eight samples had actinolite-tremolite fibers and fourteen samples had chrysotile fibers less than 5  $\mu$  which are of low concern.

EPA intends to resample at some percentage of the properties to check for seasonal effects. It also intends to sample additional properties to improve the sampling statistics.

### Schools

The news from the school sampling is good. No samples had any fibers larger than 5  $\mu$ . Three samples found actinolite-tremolite fibers smaller than 5  $\mu$ . Chrysotile fibers were found only in the administration building. No samples have been taken to date at school tracks, sites that may have asbestos, and the tracks will be sampled.

During the subsequent discussion, CAG members and people in the audience asked the following questions:

- *How many people with asbestosis disease had no association with the mine?*

Answer - An ATSDR official responded that to date 85% of the cases had occupational exposure, 10% of the cases are family members of the occupational group, and 5% are not occupationally related. Non-occupational disease cases have not been found at other sites around the nation. The

screening is expected to provide additional information relevant to the answer of this question.

- *Is there a risk of just being in Libby today?*

Sampling to date does not indicate an ambient air asbestos concentration problem. The non-occupational cases probably result from past exposures to vermiculite through path ways that no longer exist.

## **CAG Member Questions for EPA**

The CAG reviewed questions 11 through 43 and identified the entity appropriate to answer each one. Appendix 2 groups the questions accordingly. The CAG also agreed that EPA should answer in writing the questions appropriate to it, and circulate the written replies to CAG members prior to a CAG meeting, so that the answers can be discussed. After they are discussed, the answers should be published in some form in the local newspaper or papers.

## **Next Steps**

The CAG agreed to continue meeting on two meetings per month basis. The next meeting is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, April 13 in the Ponderosa Room at City Hall. The agenda will include: review of the letter drafted by Mayor Berget's committee, a report from EPA about funding to ensure that former W.R. Grace workers who have left the Libby area can be screened, and EPA's written answers to CAG member questions.

***Please bring your list of questions to the next meeting!***

# Appendix 1

## CAG Member Attendance List

### March 9, 2000

Name	Group/Organization Represented
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County Environmental Health
Tom Fennessy	St. Johns Lutheran Hospital (Alternate)
Commissioner John Konzen	Lincoln County
Wilbur Wilson	Lincoln County Council on Aging
Mike Switzer	Asbestosis Diagnosed
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Leroy Thom	Former Grace union employee and local businessman
David F. Latham	Montanian Newspaper
Mayor Tony Berget	City of Libby
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer
Cyrus Lee	Kootenai Valley Head Start
Graysen Casey	Kootenai Homes & Land
Carol Ray	Montana Covering Kids
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools
Commissioner Rita Windom	Lincoln County
Sandy Wagner	Alternate for Rita Windom
Lloyd Douglas Williamson	Libby Tax Payer
Chris Poulet	ATSDR Region 8
Dr. Chris Weis	EPA Toxicologist
Dan Middleton, MD, MPH	ATSDR Atlanta
Susan L. Muza	ATSDR Region 8
Dr. Aubry Miller	Public Health Service Physcian
Jeff Lybarger	ATSDR Atlanta
John Constan	DEQ
Paul Peronard	EPA On Scene Coordinator

## Appendix 2

### CAG Member Questions

#### New Questions Not Yet Discussed by the CAG

44. Is it correct that x-rays can't distinguish between "long, thin fibers" and "short, fat fibers"?
45. Is there a way to determine the causticness of "short, fat fibers", perhaps through analysis of victims?

#### Questions for EPA

44. Was testing for asbestos was possible 10 years ago? 20 years ago?
45. Has EPA tested homes for asbestos anywhere else?
6. I live in Troy, my attic is full of Zonolite. Why can't I be tested?
7. I did not live here as a resident until a few years ago. However, my family and I visited every summer. I understand that the screenings will be done only on long term Libby residents. What about my family?
8. I live in Troy, will I be able to be screened?
10. Will EPA contract local businesses and labor to work on mitigation work?
13. When we get a clean bill of health, whenever that is, who will help Libby get that "good new" up in all the regional, national and international press?
14. I'm not sure what this stuff looks like, how about some photos so I can tell what I'm looking for in my home and work place.
15. What does the EPA recommend a homeowner do that has vermiculite insulation in their home?
16. Homes with vermiculite insulation, do they present a health risk?
17. Are they testing, or have tested, homes of former employees of W.R.? Where asbestos could have been brought home and stayed in the carpets, etc.?
19. Will the EPA have pamphlets warning homeowners and buyers of the possible hazard of living in a home with vermiculite insulation?
20. If I have it in my yard or house, should I be tested? My siblings? My relatives?
21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.
- tt. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account? How?
- uu. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?
- vv. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?
23. Is the EPA looking at adjusting the health hazard criteria for fibers less than 5 microns in length due to the toxicity of the type of asbestos we are dealing with?

27. Who is watching the hill?
28. How will the EPA notify and make the arrangements for former workers and/or family members of former workers to come to Libby and be tested?
29. Are the results of the first screening going to be released to the public and if so will it be done in a timely manner?
30. Who will be accepting responsibility for educating the public in asbestos and its danger, County or Hospital?
31. There is concern that Zonolite insulation contains tremolite that may be hazardous to your health. Is this true and if so, why can't the situation be corrected while the expertise is still here? Vs. organizing a management program on older houses being remodeled that contain Zonolite insulation. If the owners have to foot the bill, how costly is this going to be getting the proper contractors to take it out?
32. Has there been any kind of scoring to determine whether it gets on NPL list?
33. If not, under what authority is EPA investigating and taking action?
35. What if Grace goes bankrupt?
36. What products containing asbestos are out there?
37. What are other EPA regions doing?
38. Where do we get funding from if not from Grace?
39. What is EPA doing in the two homes in which asbestos was found?
42. Who should I call with questions?
43. To whom should we refer people who have consumer products questions?

#### Questions for W.R. Grace

4. If Grace is now trying to remedy what they have done to the community and it's people, why are their spokespersons quoted in the papers referring to Libby residents as "greedy" and that is only "special interest groups" that are pushing the issue?
5. Will Grace only compensate people who are ill, or will they do anything for the town - which will suffer from a declining population, loss of home sales, etc. due to the health hazards in Libby in land, air, and homes?
9. My home is the major financial investment I have. If I sell so I can accept employment elsewhere and property values are low because of what Grace has done to the community, will Grace compensate me for the difference between the final sale price and the appraised value? What about losses I take on improvements that I have done to the home?
12. Will any senior Grace executive officials ever stand trial and do time for what they have done?
21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.
  - x. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account? How?
  - y. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR

Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?

z. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?

26. Does Grace's medical payments include prescription drugs, oxygen and tanks, hospice, home health, travel and lodging for the people who get this disease?

#### Questions for ATSDR

18. The deaths, that are blamed on asbestos, have actual autopsies been performed to determine cause of death?

21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.

aa. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account? How?

bb. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?

cc. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?

22. If smoking tobacco increases the odds of getting asbestosis, how about wood smoke or slash burning?

29. Are the results of the first screening going to be released to the public and if so will it be done in a timely manner?

30. Who will be accepting responsibility for educating the public in asbestos and its danger, County or Hospital?

40. How many people with no connection to the mine have been diagnosed with asbestosis?

#### Questions for St. Johns Hospital

3. People in the community do not trust St. Johns Hospital because they think they were in league with Grace years ago when the X-Rays were falsified. I have heard people say they will not go to St. Johns for testing or treatment. Grace has contributed money to St. Johns in the past. Who will actually "run" the testing and treatment process?

25. How did St. Johns come to the decision to accept the money? What criterion was used to help make the decision?

#### Questions for Lincoln County

11. I have read in the brief presented to the Senate Committee by the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health that Mr. Ronald Anderson believes his organization should expand its role in education about asbestos related topics. However, they told us through the newspaper that the levels in town were not a danger, less than one percent. Then the EPA came to town and it is different now. Will they get this job?

#### Questions for the Media

24. Why is the press in Libby down playing just about every EPA announcement and the rest of the state papers are hearing a different story?

#### Questions for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality

34. How can Libby get tobacco settlement money?

35. What if Grace goes bankrupt?

38. Where do we get funding from if not from Grace?

Unknown

41. Will anyone write a consolidated history of the Libby asbestos experience?

### **Appendix 3**

### **Addresses for Agency Officials**

William P. Yellowtail  
Regional Administrator  
U.S. EPA Region 8  
999 18<sup>th</sup> St. ; Suite 500  
Denver, CO 80202-2466

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